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SHEEHAN'S ARTICLE ON SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY

- Q. Is it true, as claimed in the foreward<sup>2</sup> to the Foreign Policy article, that the conversations quoted in the Sheehan article are verbatim? Was Sheehan shown transcripts or memoranda of conversations in which the Secretary participated?
- A. Mr. Sheehan, I understand, spent a year on this project talking to over 60 sources on three continents. According to the magazine itself, the author's conversations included a long trip to the area, and talks with leading Arab and Israeli officials. People in the State Department also talked to him on a background basis. In his contacts here Mr. Sheehan did not see any transcripts, memoranda, or official records, and he was not authorized to quote directly anything told him here. So far as the Department is concerned, the use of the term "verbatim" to describe the conversations quoted is inaccurate.
- Q. Then you are intimating that he was very thoroughly briefed, and reconstructed the conversations from his notes. The basic question is whether those quotes and the information conveyed in them are accurate.
- A. I repeat--so far as the Department of State is concerned, it is inaccurate to describe the conversations and quotations as verbatim. We cannot speak for others to whom he talked. As to the style and technique chosen by the author in writing his article, that is not for me to explain. The Secretary has said many times, in many other cases, that we respect the confidentiality of diplomatic conversations. The conduct of our diplomacy depends upon others having confidence that what they say to us will remain private.

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That remains our firm policy. So I am not going to get into a discussion of the substance of that article.

Q. You mean you are going to let stand Sheehan's assertion that, first, President Nixon, and, later, President Ford (at Salzburg) assured Arab leaders--particularly Sadat--in Secretary Kissinger's hearing that the United States is committed to returning Israel to its pre-June 1967 borders?

A. I have said that I am not going to comment on alleged conversations between the President and other leaders. American policy on the question of final boundaries in the Middle East remains what has been stated so many times: We support United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967 which sets out the elements to be included in a peace settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. That resolution combines Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories, with acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area within in the context of peace. secure and recognized boundaries. We have repeatedly said, and repeat once again, that it is for the parties themselves to work out implementation of this resolution--including their negotiation of the final boundaries between them. That is all I have to say on the subject.

Q. Then, the United States has no position on whether Israel should go back to its pre-1967 boundaries?

A. It is not for the United States to present a blueprint for a final settlement or to draw boundaries. As I have said, under Resolution 242, it is for the parties themselves to negotiate those boundaries.